

Better Parenting: 7 Tips For Back To School

By Sonia Spackman MA, MFT

I went back to last year's column in August and felt it was worth revisiting as we are entering into new schools and a new school year. Many kids worry and are stressed about fitting in and making friends, having more homework and finding their way in the new school. Here are 7 tips you might try to make this school year easier for your child and you.

1. If your child is worried or nervous about school.

a. Let your child know it's normal to be nervous. Let your child share his or her feelings and worries while you just listen. I discovered with my own kids that I needed to let them "just talk" without trying to change their thinking.
b. It's okay to ask questions, what kids don't want is lectures or nagging. Share some positive or funny stories about your back-to-school jitters.

Elementary school

a. This year some of the kids that were bus riders will be walking and some that were walkers will be riding the bus. To help them get used to their new routine you might want to walk your child to school a few times or to the bus before and after school starts.
b. You might buy something special as a way of "looking forward" to the first day of school. Or buy a game or toy they can play with when they get home from school.

Note: The Vernonia Elementary School has provided books to the

Vernonia Library you can check out and read to your child about what other children have felt and what they have done when they felt nervous about going to school.

Middle/High School

a. Stress can intensify when kids make the leap from grade school to middle school or middle school to high school. With older kids you can go over their class schedule with them so they know where each classroom is located, especially because this is the first year in the new school building.

b. Suggest activities your child might like to get involved in that are enjoyable to them.

c. You could point out that all the kids are new kids at the new school, and maybe they can help other kids get around.

2. Teach your kids to organize first.

a. Help kids organize their rooms. Get rid of the clutter and have them organize their drawers and closets for their school clothes. A clean room will get your kids started on the right foot.

b. Make a habit with the kids to lay out their clothes the night before so it is easier to get ready for school in the morning.

c. Train your children to keep their supplies in their backpacks.

d. Have the kids immediately put finished homework in their backpack with any books that were used.

e. Have each kid place their backpack in the exact spot every day, such as by the door. This will save you and the kids from the morning panic trying to gather

up homework and find their backpacks.
f. Also be sure you check the backpack each day for any information sent home from the school.

3. Fuel their minds and their bodies

a. An important way to ensure your child's success is to make healthy meals and snacks and cut back on the sweets and caffeine drinks.

b. Brain healthy foods for breakfast might be string cheese with wheat crackers and fruit or scrambled eggs with cheese in a tortilla. Afternoon snacks could be string cheese, fruit or oatmeal raisin cookies. Vernonia Elementary School provides balanced delicious breakfasts starting at 7:30 AM and balanced lunches for all grades.

4. Set a time for homework and chores

a. Set aside time each day that your children will use for homework and chores. It is a good idea to have an hour of fun and a snack after school and then it is time to do the homework and then chores. Homework should start before 5:00 PM This routine helps kids develop habits for tougher and longer assignments that are required for middle school and high school.

b. Help your child learn to be a self-starter when it comes to homework and planning for projects and tests. Put up a calendar on a wall, door or desk just for tests and projects. Parents who do this help their kids develop life patterns that will benefit them in adulthood.

5. Plan for enough sleep and begin right away

a. If your kids have been staying up later during the summer like most kids, start getting them to bed a little earlier each night and waking them up a little earlier in the morning so they can ease into the day. The last thing you want is the hassle of trying to get them out of bed the last minute and off to school in time.

b. Kids need to be rested to do well in school. Start getting the kids on the school routine by turning off the TV and video games earlier each night until they are in the routine they need to get their rest.

6. Help your kids develop a love for reading

a. Make reading important in your home. Read aloud to your child or set aside time where you have your child read to you--maybe your family can read silently together.

b. Teach your kids to be interested in books--for every interest there is a book or magazine.

7. Teach your kids right from wrong

This is the thing that will improve peer relationships and grades more than anything else. The real world your child grows up in will punish crimes, so give your child a head start by teaching them right from wrong. It will be the best gift you can give your kids.

References: Steven George, Better Homes and Gardens, Laolan Madden, Mom's Home Room, Maya Cohen, Family Education, Patty Catalano, School Family.com

Report From the WOECA Annual Meeting *continued from page 6*

that the Board of Directors is engaged and dedicated. Farmer reported that the Board of Directors is considering a 4% rate increase that would raise about \$340,000. \$250,000 would help replenish the reserve account that was used to pay for the storm event this past year and \$90,000 would be used to pay for year--round tree trimming crews.

Member Jack Phillips spoke from the floor during New Business, and spoke representing a group of members that calls themselves "The Power of One." Phillips read a prepared statement in which he expressed anxiety over rising rates and possible solutions. Phillips asked the Board of Directors to consider operational transparency and alternative energy choices. He asked for a forensic and economic audit by an independent CPA and a performance audit by a utilities engineer to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency. He also asked for a strong Board of Directors that openly determines policy, sets priorities, directs the CEO and keeps the membership informed. He asked that WOECA

vigorously pursue development of its own power generation through alternative, renewable energy, including solar, micro hydro, wind and geothermal. He asked the Board to begin research and planning for this. He asked for a stronger conservation program. He asked whether the current debt load could be restructured to lower interest rates and payments. He asked whether the Coop Connections Program and Ruralite magazine were necessary. He asked how WOECA might increase their customer base, both residentially and industrially. He asked whether reducing the territory served is a viable option. And he asked what organizational structure best fit the WOECA membership--Coop, PUD or should it be dissolved.

Several other members spoke about the comments from the floor before General Manager Farmer responded, even though Phillips reminded him that his comments were directed to the Board of Directors for answers. Farmer went on and stated that the Coop is already subject to a required annual audit which is avail-

able to the membership. He stated that he is a member of the county Economic Development Committee. He also spoke about the high cost of purchasing alternative energy for distribution. He discussed the positive impact of having some type of large industry in a service area, which WOECA does not enjoy and the density and load of the WOECA service area, which increases operational costs.

A vigorous discussion ensued about the ability to sell off pieces of the territory or just cut off several areas. A motion was then made to close the New Business portion of the meeting which was quickly seconded. Board President VanNatta attempted to go ahead without a vote by membership on the motion, but was forced by the members to take a vote. A voice vote in favor of closing New Business was enough for VanNatta to move forward with the meeting.

Members enjoyed a lunch served by Terrel's BBQ following the meeting.



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